

# Feed the Future Innovation Lab

## For *Collaborative Research on Nutrition* - Asia

### Helen Keller International - Annual Report - Year 4

## Feed the Future Innovation Lab

For Collaborative Research on Global Nutrition

### Annual Report

***Helen Keller International***

***Year 4 (2013-2014)***

***Feed the Future Nutrition Innovation Lab-Asia***

#### Management Entity Information

Founded in 1915 by Helen Keller and George Kessler, Helen Keller International (HKI) is among the oldest international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) devoted to preventing blindness and reducing malnutrition in the world. HKI currently works in 22 countries: 13 in Africa and eight in Asia-Pacific, and the United States. [www.hki.org](http://www.hki.org)

HKI Nepal has been operating in Nepal since 1989, primarily working with national partner organizations. HKI Nepal's current portfolio includes a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded five-year integrated nutrition and health program called "Suaahara," which was started in September 2011 in collaboration with Save the Children, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs, JHPIEGO, Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH), Nepali Technical Assistance Group (NTAG) and National Planning Commission (NPCS).

Currently HKI Nepal is also working on two Innovation Lab activities: Livestock and Climate Change Innovation Lab: Improving the resilience of mixed farming system to pending climate change in for western Nepal with Utah State University (USU), and Nutrition Innovation Lab: Policy and Science for Health, Agriculture and Nutrition (PoSHAN) Policy study with Tufts University. A recent series of studies "Assessment and research in child feeding (ARCH)" is primarily examining infant and young child feeding practices and product labeling, and promotion practices (violations) of commercially-produced breast milk substitutes and complimentary foods in Nepal, which is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In addition, HKI is supporting the USAID-funded SPRING Project case study on "Pathways to Better Nutrition" which aims to explore how the Nepalese government prioritizes nutrition interventions and supports the implementation of its national nutrition plan to reach its chosen goal of reducing undernutrition.

PoSHAN research draws on national policies and large-scale, multi-sector programs currently underway in Nepal. This research study has two components: PoSHAN Policy and PoSHAN Community. The former is conducted by Tufts University in partnership with HKI, and Valley Research Group (VaRG), while the latter is led by JHU in partnership with NTAG and New Era. The research is supported by the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) Department of Health Services (DHS)/child Health Division (CHD) and is conducted in 21 randomly-selected field sites across Nepal. Key informant interviews using semi-structured questionnaires are conducted as part of the PoSHAN Process to analyze how a range of policies and programs are translated, from the design to the implementation phase, along a chain leading from central (government) level down to the ultimate beneficiary (household) level in Nepal. Building on the ‘institutional readiness for change’ theory, and assessments of vertical versus horizontal integration as approaches to enhanced cross-sectoral coordination, the research plans to link metrics of institutional and individual collaboration at the central level with metrics of program fidelity at the local level.

### List of Program Partners<sup>1</sup>

PoSHAN process research is a joint collaboration between Tufts University and Patan Academy of Medical Sciences (PAHS). For the data collection and field activities, Valley Research Group (VaRG), Lalitpur, Nepal was contracted through HKI Nepal.

### Acronyms

PoSHAN - Policy and Science for Health, Agriculture and Nutrition

VaRG - Valley Research Group

HKI - Helen Keller International

VDC - Village Development Committee

MSNP - Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plan

NHRC - Nepal Health Research Council

PAHS - Patan Academy of Health Sciences

Suaahara – USAID-funded nutrition program

KISAN – Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition

BBNC- Bangalore Boston Nutrition Collaborative

CHD - Child Health Division

NPC- National Planning Commission

### I) Executive Summary

PoSHAN, which means “good nutrition” in Nepali, is annual process research undertaken in 21 sites across the mountains, hills, and terai of Nepal. The PoSHAN policy study is designed to understand processes that support nutrition program impact and focuses on generating

<sup>1</sup> US universities and international partners by country.

rigorous empirical evidence to explain how and why large-scale, multi-sectoral policies and programs in nutrition achieve their goals (or not) in various settings.

The longitudinal prospective study consisting of three rounds of data collection involves analytical tests, including frequency checks and cross tabulation. Preliminary findings of Round I were shared with the different government and non-government stakeholders. Findings from the first round of data collection will be shared with the wider network of stakeholders during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Scientific Symposium in November 2014. Additionally, data will be made available at the various levels of government as research briefs.

Data collection for PoSHAN Round II, was the major activity conducted during this reporting period. Field enumerators were trained and mobilized for data collection on July 6, 2014. To date, data collection has been completed in 14 of the 21 districts.

Apart from the PoSHAN study, discussions and planning are underway for the “Aflatoxin Study” and the Suaahara operations study on frontline workers.

The Innovation Lab Council Partners meeting was another activity that took place in March 2014. The three-day workshop was held in Kathmandu, followed by a two-day field visit to different sites. The logistics were managed by HKI, who also accompanied the visiting parties on both trips.

## II) Program Activities and Highlights<sup>2</sup> – October 2013-August 2014

Preparation and management of the Round II survey was the major activity during this reporting period.

### Preparation for Round II Data Collection

- **Agencies Contracted:** Scopes of Work (SoW) were prepared for two agencies contracted for Round II data collection. Based on the performance of Round I and the importance of maintaining continuity, HKI decided to contract VaRG for Round II. The study team decided to use electronic devices (tablets) this year. Different options were explored, feasibility was assessed and the decision was made to proceed with tablets. Neolinx was contracted for developing the front-end data collection tools (software app) for the survey and for providing technical input.
- **Refinement of Round II Instruments:** Round II instruments took a substantial amount of time to review and finalize. Instruments were finalized following a series of meetings and discussion. Instruments were simultaneously translated into Nepali.

<sup>2</sup> Summary of program activities for the year, no more than one page in length.

A Field Guideline was prepared for enumerators both in English and Nepali. The guideline was designed as a reference material that includes study details and procedures for the data collection activity. The final draft of the instruments was then field tested in two sites at different levels. An amendment letter was submitted to NHRC that included the change in instruments and the use of tablets.

- **Training and Data Collection:** A seven-day intensive orientation training was provided to the field teams for Round II data collection procedures before they were mobilized for the study. The first two days of training focused on an introduction to the study, objectives of the survey and introduction to the tablets.

Practice interviews and role-play practice sessions were conducted, followed by two days of field practice and two days of feedback sessions. Enumerators were also evaluated based on the pre/post test. Monitoring visits were conducted to ensure the quality of the data-collection process. The HKI team visited different sites, observed the interviews and provided necessary feedback to the teams for improving their performance.

### **Dissemination of Round I Findings**

- Study findings from the first round of data were shared with the government and other stakeholders in July 2014 at the Department of Health Services/Child Health Division.
- Three research briefs were developed based on analysis of the Round I data, appropriate to district interventions—MSNP, Suaahara and KISAN.

### **Get-Together Meeting**

- An event was held to convene some of the BBNC candidates, who were supported for training in research methods, to build a network among them and to share their experiences about the usefulness and skills gained from the training as well as to seek feedback and recommendation for the future training.

### **Nutrition Innovation Lab - Partners' Meeting**

- HKI provided the logistical and on-site support for the Annual Innovation Lab Council Partners Meeting, called “Scaling Up Agricultural Research and Technologies and Designing Research for Improved Nutritional Outcomes,” from March 10-12, 2014, which was held at Hotel Shangri-La, Kathmandu, Nepal. HKI staff also accompanied attendees on trips to field sites in Nepalgunj, Banke, Thumpakhar and Sindupalchowk.

### Aflatoxin Study

- For the upcoming Aflatoxin Study, a protocol was discussed in several meetings with the Tufts team and PaHS. Different modalities for the protocol, design, work plan and activities were discussed and a draft protocol was prepared for final review and revision.

### III) **Key Accomplishments**<sup>3</sup>

Two major key accomplishments of this reporting period are mentioned below.

#### Completion of Round I Activities and Sharing of the Findings

- Data entry of approximately 700 open-ended questionnaires was a challenge. To accomplish this, different categories were developed, codes were assigned and information was entered. After the analysis, preliminary findings were shared with concerned stakeholders and three research briefs were developed. More research briefs from Round I findings are in the pipeline.

#### Finalization of Round II Study Instruments and Mobilization of Field Team for Data Collection

- After several discussions and Skype meetings with the Tufts team in Boston, instruments for the second round of the PoSHAN survey were revised, refined and the final draft was prepared. The Round I data instrument included open-ended questions. The team decided to record responses in Likert scale this time, so finalization of the instrument took considerable time and effort. Electronic devices (tablets) were used for data collection for which the survey tool app was developed for android tablets and configured to all devices. After six days of intensive training, all six teams were successfully mobilized in the field for data collection.

### IV) **Research Project Reports**<sup>4</sup>

(1) Name: PoSHAN Policy Process Survey

(2) Presentations and Publications

- Nutrition Innovation Lab Research Brief No. 15, July 2014 *“Governance of Nutrition Policies and Programming: Preliminary findings from PoSHAN process research in Nepal”*

<sup>3</sup> Concise statement of achievements, limited to one page in length that focuses on outputs, not process, such as Feed the Future indicators and distillation of program achievements across all program activities. Reporting on numbers of project meetings is not an output.

<sup>4</sup> Summaries of project activities, highlights and outcomes, not scientific reports or long detailed research papers, no more than one page per project.

- Nutrition Innovation Lab Research Brief No. 16, August 2014 *“Perception and Practices Relating to Nutrition among Decision-Makers at Suaahara sites of Nepal”*

## V) Human and Institutional Capacity Development<sup>5</sup>

Training for the second round of PoSHAN was conducted over a seven-day period (two additional days were included this year) from June 16-23, 2014.

**Day 1** was spent introducing the Nutrition Innovation Lab, PoSHAN study (goals, objectives, methods, sites, etc.) and the district level questionnaire.

**Day 2** began with a review of the first day, followed by a review of each question at the district level, explaining its objective and clarifying issues raised by the enumerators. Manuals explaining the questionnaire were used during the training. Tablets were introduced at the end of Day 2.

**Day 3** began with a review of Day 2. We then explained the survey app and the use of tablets. The teams learned how to download the surveys from the server, fill it out, save and send it using the Ward level questionnaire. Various scenarios were enacted with troubleshooting complications included. The Ward Level questionnaire was explained highlighting differences from the other three levels and teams practiced using the tablets for the Ward Level questionnaire.

**Days 4 and 5** were spent in the field interviews. A total of 26 interviews were conducted—10 at the district level with various officials (health, livestock, agriculture, women development, education, WASH); four at the Ilaka (or neighborhood) Level (head, health, and agriculture) (2); five at the VDC level (health); and seven at the Ward Level with Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHVs). We had a review session on the morning of Day 5 to go through any issues from the interviews on Day 4. The teams performed well despite a few glitches that were found on the survey app, which were duly remedied by Neolinx.

**Day 6** included a post-training evaluation survey. The average score was 37 out of 43. We went through each question starting with those with the lowest score. Following this exercise, each team spoke about their field experience, highlighting any challenges they faced with the survey questions, respondent's understanding of the questions posed to them, use of tablets, etc. The teams did mock interviews and we concluded the day re-administering the post-training evaluation survey. The average score this time was 40.5.

**Day 7** started with a review of the post-training evaluation survey. The rest of the day was spent explaining reporting forms and formats (for the enumerators, supervisors, and coordinator), interview lists, and reviewing the data collection process once more.

<sup>5</sup> This section is to serve as a compilation of all program training activities and is not meant to duplicate the Capacity Building section under individual Research Project Reports. It can be in chart format.